

**STATEMENT OF MARY A. BOMAR, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC  
LANDS OF THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE  
FISCAL YEAR 2008 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**MARCH 1, 2007**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this oversight hearing on the FY 2008 President's request for the National Park Service (NPS). We thank you for your continuing support of the work we do as stewards of many of our Nation's most treasured natural and cultural resources.

On the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the national park system in August 2006, President George W. Bush directed Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne to "enhance our national parks during the decade leading up to the 2016 centennial celebration...and prepare them for another century of conservation, preservation and enjoyment." With this vision as a backdrop, the FY 2008 President's Budget sets the stage for the next 100 years of our national parks. It includes the National Park Centennial Initiative, a historic multi-year initiative beginning in FY 2008, which provides a foundation for the President's charge and a strategy for the successful achievement of the initiative's goals. This initiative proposes up to \$3 billion in new funds for the national park system over the next ten years – \$1 billion through additional annual appropriations for operations above and beyond regular increases; and \$1 billion in philanthropic donations that would be matched by up to \$1 billion in Federal funds.

To implement the initiative, we will be seeking this Committee's assistance in approving legislation to establish the National Park Centennial Challenge fund. This fund would make available up to \$100 million a year over the next ten years in mandatory funds to match non-Federal cash donations of up to \$100 million a year for signature projects and programs at national parks. We understand the constraints that this committee is operating under with respect to the "pay-as-you-go" rule for legislation that has a budgetary impact and we would like to work with you to find a way to offset the cost of the proposed fund. We note that the costs of this proposal are offset within the President's Budget for the Department of the Interior, which includes legislative proposals with sufficient net budget savings that fall under this Committee's jurisdiction.

The Challenge is designed to encourage philanthropists, foundations, park friends groups, park visitors, corporations, and private citizens to demonstrate their support for national parks. If authorized, the funds leveraged through this public/private partnership will be used to accomplish signature projects that protect park assets, preserve the heritage of America, maintain park facilities and improve the services offered by the NPS to its visitors. Secretary Kempthorne will present a list of signature projects and programs as part of the Centennial Report due to the President in May 2007. The list will draw upon ideas generated through listening sessions, public engagement, and the input of NPS professionals.

In terms of appropriated funding, the FY 2008 budget request proposes total discretionary budget authority of \$2.4 billion, an increase of \$261.2 million over the FY 2007 continuing resolution that ended on February 15, 2007, and an increase of \$47.4 million from the FY 2006 enacted level. Discretionary authority includes the Operation of the National Park System, U.S. Park Police, National Recreation and Preservation, Historic Preservation, Construction, and Land Acquisition and State Assistance appropriations.

With enactment of the final FY 2007 continuing resolution, we now have a full year appropriation of \$2.279 billion, not including additional funds that will be provided for 50 percent of the January 2007 pay raise. Based on the direction in the continuing resolution we are preparing a detailed operating plan for FY 2007 which we will submit to Congress by March 17, 2007. At that time we will be able to provide comparisons at the program level with the FY 2008 budget request. The comparisons in our FY 2008 Budget Request (the Greenbook) are with the FY 2007 continuing resolution which was in effect through February 15.

The budget request represents the largest budget request ever for park operations and programs that benefit the national park system. For park operations this is an increase of \$258 million above the FY 2006 enacted level.

For the appropriation accounts that directly benefit the national park system – Operation of the National Park System, United States Park Police, Construction and Major Maintenance, and Federal Land Acquisition – the budget proposes \$2.3 billion. Even as funds are shifted to ensure operational capacity at parks, the asset management programs of the NPS remain strong and vital, with a renewed emphasis on preventive maintenance to safeguard the multi-billion investment in maintaining facilities.

The FY 2008 budget request includes an increase of \$57.5 million to fully fund non-discretionary fixed cost increases. The request also includes an estimated \$556 million in mandatory accounts, including fee and concession receipts, donations, the United States Park Police Pension Fund and other special revenue authorities.

This historic budget request will address a number of themes through an investment that will:

**I. Meet the President's National Park Centennial Commitment to Fund New Levels of Excellence in Parks**, with \$100 million to provide the impetus needed to enhance visitor operations and provide a legacy for the future. A visit to a national park unit should be safe, healthful, educational, and, above all, memorable. Therefore, the NPS is requesting \$40.6 million to hire 3,000 more seasonal park rangers, guides and maintenance workers; \$35 million to conduct regular and cultural preventive maintenance to extend the life of facilities; \$3.4 million to enhance the Volunteers-in-Parks program and capture an untapped reserve of park volunteers; \$1 million to enroll more children in Junior/Web Ranger Programs; and \$20 million for flexible park funding at 20 to 25 parks to make measurable improvements in natural and cultural resource conditions. This addition is proposed to continue over the next decade.

**II. Engage all Americans to Protect our Resources through Signature Projects and Programs** by challenging the public to contribute \$100 million a year for ten years. The

operational component (President's National Park Centennial Commitment) of \$100 million in discretionary funds is complemented by up to \$100 million in special mandatory Federal funding (National Park Centennial Challenge fund) that would be available to match \$100 million in donations for signature projects and programs. This provides the potential to make \$200 million available per year to the NPS in addition to regular appropriations. A legislative proposal will be submitted to authorize this new source of funding. The process of selecting signature projects to be funded through the Challenge will be an outgrowth of the Centennial Report due to the President in May 2007, which is based on input gathered from the American people. The Secretary will present a list of signature projects and programs as part of the Centennial Report.

**III. Establish a Critical Base for Park Operations** through capacity enhancement funding of \$130 million above the FY 2007 President's Request. High priority budget increases include \$54.0 million for operational fixed costs (\$57.5 million for all appropriations), \$40.6 million for specific park base increases, \$1.0 million for park brochures, \$150,000 for the initial development of the new Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, \$850,000 to update park interpretive exhibits and programs to better link park areas to nearby national trails, \$1.825 million for youth programs, \$1.0 million to improve the content of information technology-based park interpretation, and \$15.0 million for the repair/rehabilitation program. Other critical increases include \$4.8 million for the new Financial and Business Management System, \$300,000 to support the Vanishing Treasures Initiative, \$4.0 million to support the Enterprise Services Network, and \$300,000 for the Centennial Implementation Office. Decreases include \$476,000 for Jamestown 2007 and Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery II.

Over the past five years, the NPS has undertaken over 6,600 projects to improve conditions in parks. Looking forward, we must now act to ensure that future generations will enjoy the gift that our forefathers left us. Our grandchildren – and their grandchildren – need to be able to walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, stand in awe as Old Faithful Geyser erupts, climb Denali or the Grand Teton, experience the splendor of the Grand Canyon and Yosemite Valley, walk the path of Pickett's Charge, or imagine arriving at Ellis Island as their ancestors did, with nothing but the clothes on their back to start a new life.

This critical base enhancement for park operations is crucial to the success of the National Park Centennial Initiative. With Federal funding stepping up to set a solid foundation, it is likely that the philanthropic efforts will be enhanced. All 390 parks will benefit from the funding proposed in the FY 2008 President's Budget.

**IV. Reconnect People to their Parks** by making history and science come alive to all Americans. Several previously mentioned increases contained in the President's National Park Centennial Commitment and the funding dedicated to building critical base will serve as a catalyst to achieve the goal of connecting people to parks. These include increases for the Junior/Web ranger program, youth programs, and enhancing content of information technology based park interpretation. Parks are a place where school children can be curious and learn; there is no better laboratory in which to learn about the natural and cultural history of an area than a national park. The 390 units of the national park system collectively tell the American story from the cold winters of Valley Forge to the natural majesty of the Rocky Mountains.

**V. Continue our responsibilities in Asset Management** through a continued emphasis on more professional management of our facilities through a systematic inventory, comprehensive condition assessments of all assets, specific performance targets, and the financial investment necessary to sustain these assets over time. The asset management effort can be found in both the President's National Park Centennial Commitment component of the request and the critical base funding. In addition, a strong, well-managed construction program, assistance from the Federal Highway Administration and continued use of recreation fee revenue for deferred maintenance provides budgetary flexibility in addressing this important effort.

Total construction and maintenance funding is proposed at \$663 million in FY 2008, an increase of \$40 million from FY 2007 President's Budget. This includes \$202 million for construction, including a line-item program of \$105 million. As previously noted, there are also increases of \$35.0 million for cyclic maintenance and \$15.0 million for the repair and rehabilitation program. This funding will support measurable improvements in park facilities, as tracked by the Facility Condition Index.

**VI. Sustain our Stewardship Responsibilities that Reach Beyond the National Park System** through programs such as Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance, heritage partnerships, Preserve America, and historic preservation grants. The NPS is requesting funding of \$1.5 million to expand the American Battlefield Grants program, \$650,000 to enhance the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance program, and \$5.0 million to establish a National Inventory of Historic Properties grant program. These latter grants would make existing inventories more accessible and provide significant long-term cost savings for cities, transportation departments, and others that need to know the type and location of historic properties. This was the key recommendation from historic preservation professionals at the 2006 Preserve America Summit. Compared to last year's request, the FY 2008 Budget increases funding for national heritage areas by \$2.6 million, maintains funding for Preserve America at \$10 million, and reduces funding for Save America's Treasures to \$10 million, or roughly the amount of competitive grants provided in 2006 and 2007.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my summary of the FY 2008 budget request for NPS. We would be pleased to answer any questions you and the other members of the subcommittee may have.